

Appl. No. : 09/879,981
Amdt. dated : March 4, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated September 4, 2003

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Please add the following new claims 2 through 21:

1. (Canceled)

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2. (New) A method for providing a user-specific response, the method comprising:
receiving an inquiry from a user;
associating the user with a search profile designated by a subscriber;
conducting a search delimited by the search profile;
providing a search result to the user;
reporting the search result to the subscriber;
receiving a request for additional information from the user;
initiating a contact between the user and an expert in response to the request for
additional information; and
receiving the expert's response and forwarding the response to the user.

dy 2. (New) The method of claim 2 wherein the inquiry is in a natural-language form.

3. (New) The method of claim 2 wherein the receiving an inquiry from a user
further comprises indexing the inquiry according to pre-defined search terms.

4. (New) The method of claim 2 wherein the inquiry is made by selecting at least
one topic from a plurality of pre-defined topics.

5. (New) The method of claim 2 wherein the search profile is pre-defined by the
subscriber.

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6. (New) The method of claim 2 wherein the conducting a search further comprises accessing at least one database.

7. (New) A network for providing responses to an inquiry from a user affiliated with a network subscriber, the network comprising:

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a database containing information of interest to the user and a processor coupled to the database, the processor programmed with a software to:

receive an inquiry from the user;

associate the user with a service profile to determine the scope of the search;

search for at least one response to the user's inquiry in the database;

provide the at least one response to the user; and

forward the inquiry to a consultant in response to a request for further information by the user.

8. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein the processor is further programmed with a software to report the inquiry and the at least one response to the network subscriber.

9. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein the processor is further programmed with a software to search at least one other database for a response to the user's inquiry.

10. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein in the processor is further programmed with a software to report the inquiry and the at least one response to the network subscriber.

11. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein the processor is further programmed with a software to forward the consultant's response to the user.

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12. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein the processor is further programmed to update a database to include the consultant's response.

13. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein the network updates the database.

14. (New) The network of claim 7 wherein the network subscriber designates the consultant.

15. (New) A method for providing a specific response to a user's inquiry, the method comprising:

receiving an inquiry from a user having a pre-defined service profile identifying at least one expert to provide a response to the inquiry;

forwarding the inquiry to the expert;

receiving a response from the expert; and

forwarding the response to the user.

16. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising updating a database to include the inquiry and the response provided thereof.

17. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising forwarding the response to a subscriber associated with the user.

18. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising providing the expert's response to a second user having a substantially similar inquiry.

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19. (New) An apparatus for providing a response to a user's inquiry, the user being affiliated with a subscriber, the apparatus comprising:

a first database having at least one service profile determined by the subscriber and associates with a user;

a plurality of information databases having information indexed to accommodate search;

a processor connected to each of the first database and the second database, the processor programmed with a software to:

receive an inquiry from a user;

search the first database to obtain the service profile associated with the user, the service profile identifying at least one information database and at least one expert to provide a response to the inquiry;

conduct a search of the information database to provide at least one response to the inquiry and report the at least one response to the user;

responsive to a request for additional information concerning the inquiry, forward the inquiry to an expert to obtain a second response;

forward the second response to the user; and

update the information database to include the second response.

20. (New) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the processor is further programmed with a software to notify the subscriber of the inquiry and the response.

21. (New) The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising a machine-readable medium coupled to the processor to store the software.